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SUBJECT: AFTERMATH OF SOMALIA DEATHS: BURUNDI WILL STAY IN  
SOMALIA

REF: A. BUJUMBURA 499

[1](#)B. BUJUMBURA 500

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES CHARLES H. TWINING FOR  
REASON 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. With all attention in Bujumbura centered on the funerals of the twelve soldiers killed in Somalia September 17, the event has generated discussion about whether Burundi should remain in AMISOM. At this time, the answer here is yes. Most calls are for an expansion of AMISOM's mandate to allow it to undertake offensive actions rather than remain in a static defense position. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) The GOB announced a five day period of mourning beginning September 18. The Presidential spokesman said the Government condemned "the attack perpetrated by Somali extremists" and said the GOB is "committed to supporting without reservation the initiative of the international community to bring peace to Somalia." He asked that the community strengthen the materiel support provided to its troops. The Defense Ministry spokesman reiterated the Burundian commitment. He also called for a change in AMISOM's mandate to permit offensive action to be taken and for an increase in personnel and equipment. Media of all persuasions have been broadcasting the various government statements of support, usually along with the Embassy's own statement (ref B). Other helpful statements being broadcast have been those of the head of the International Conference of the Great Lakes and of the UN Secretary General.

[1](#)3. (U) The bodies of the twelve Burundian troops, including that of outgoing Deputy AMISOM Force Commander Major General Juvenal Niyoyunguruza, were returned to Bujumbura September 19, with funeral services and burials here the following day. Visitors to Bujumbura who spoke at graveside included the AU representative for Somalia, the Transitional Government's Minister of Public Security, representatives of the UN, the U.S., the EU, and of the Rwandan and Ugandan military. The Somali representative told the Burundians, "Please don't give up; we need your help." The Ugandan head, former AMISOM Commander General Okello, said the attacks would not dampen Uganda's resolve to help its Somali brothers. He asked that a new look be taken at the mandate. GOB Minister of National Defense Lt. Gen. Germain Niyoyankana, told the Somali that Burundians are not there for business or tourism but for Somalia. He asked Somalis to stop the killing. He also asked the international community for sufficient equipment and authorization to take the offensive.

[1](#)4. (U) AFP dispatched from Bujumbura September 19 an article entitled, "Burundi opposition seeks troop recall from Somalia." There was little substance to the article, citing only two of this country's 43 parties -- the UPD and the CNDD, both offshoots and bitter rivals of the ruling CNDD-FDD party -- as sources. (A third, insignificant party, the PT or Workers' Party, has joined the call, stating that Burundian and Ugandan troops are there to pillage Somalia's resources for the West, particularly the U.S.) The AFP article failed to mention that the great majority of other

political parties -- both wings of FRODEBU, UPRONA, MSD, MRC, ABASA -- as well as the civil society organization OAG, have all called for supporting the troops. Uprona did strike a responsive chord, however, in asking that Parliament debate the troop issue when it resumes its session in October. Both the CNDD-FDD and Uprona chiefs were prominent at the funeral services. Even the UPD hedged its call for withdrawal, calling for a pull out unless Parliament takes a new look at the situation. MSD chief Alexis Sindhuje travelled to Nairobi to visit wounded soldiers and told the media that, as the region had supported Burundi in its time of troubles, so, too, should Burundi support the region and fight for liberty in Somalia. The CNDD party asked to bring home the troops, who cannot succeed where the "big powers" have failed, to which Sindhuje replied that the West had pulled out of Somalia previously because its troops were needed elsewhere, not due to failure.

15. (U) As for the popular mood, a Minister told us during the funeral service what we have heard from others outside the government, that Burundians have known so much killing in their history that the September 17 suicide attack merely represented "one more incident." A Web-passed Burundian news service suggested that the Burundians and Ugandans have taken the fall for the Americans following our killing September 14 of the Kenyan terrorist. It went on to observe, however, that the mood in the Army is to stick with the fight. As for the population, it continued, public opinion is "soft" and generally follows the government line.

16. (C) All that is not to say that we can just sit back and allow the situation to go back to normal. First Vice President Yves Sahinguvu, the ranking official at the September 20 ceremonies, asked the Charge to request Washington to lobby hard in the UNSC for additional countries to contribute troops to AMISOM and provide troops with better equipment. We said we intend to do both. In his subsequent comments at the burial site, the Vice President added the need to make AMISOM's mission more robust. Defense Minister Niyoyankana confided that he will travel to Kampala September 23 for a meeting convened to discuss the lack of troops in the Somali operation.

17. (C) In a lengthy meeting with the Minister September 21, he insisted to us that Burundi will hold to its course. Parliament may well have its say, he said, but he doubts that the outcome will be different. He volunteered that he met with President Nkurunziza September 19, who criticized the stance several parties have taken and said that Burundi will maintain the mission, asking Minister Niyoyankana to continue to seek support from the international community. The Minister said that if his troops are to work effectively, they must be able to go on the offensive against potential threats, and for this both Burundi and Uganda need appropriate equipment, e.g., tanks, mine detection equipment, night vision goggles, money for its intelligence people to be able to recruit Somali agents. He feels strongly that per diem payments equal to those others receive in peacekeeping operations elsewhere in the world would make a difference in motivation. Food shipped from Burundi rather than procured elsewhere would be a good morale factor. Additional training is always welcome but, if it must be done by contractors, Minister Niyoyankana would prefer to see professional American military personnel at least overseeing all training of Burundian troops. Asked about rumors that the Burundians have brought equipment back here from Somalia, the Minister bristled and said he would like to see any and all evidence of that happening. A fourth battalion is ready and willing to depart, though he acknowledged that other signs of support coming first might help pave the way for better acceptance by public opinion.

18. (C) Comment. This is an opportunity for the local politicians to make hay, and the variety of reactions quoted show just how mixed their views are, though most are supportive. The government seems firm in its commitment to AMISOM, from all indications that we can see, and there is little reason to believe public support is far behind. While

there is undoubtedly equipment supply and upgrades needed, the September 17 incident was a failure of security procedures at AMISOM, not of equipment. Minister Niyoyankana feels strongly that "We are engaged, and we must live with the consequences." When we met with him, he had just ended a meeting with the General Staff, with the decision taken to send a group to Somalia to meet with the troops and prepare the way for the Minister's own subsequent visit. If there is a consensus here on something, it is that the peacekeeping operation's mission needs to be expanded from that of static defense to a Chapter 7 type operation and, while we cannot figure out from here whether the ball is in the court of the AU or the UNSC, it would appear that it is time to pick up that ball.

Twining